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The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Letter dated 29 February 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 28 February 2000 from Said W. Musa, Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belize, providing details of the illegal arrest of four members of Belize's security forces, within the territory of Belize, by Guatemalan military personnel on 24 February 2000 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 47.

(*Signed*) Michael A. **Ashcroft**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 28 February 2000 from the Prime Minister of Belize addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you of a recent incident in which elements of the Guatemalan Armed Forces, in violation of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, entered Belize and forcibly removed four members of Belize's security forces from Belizean territory into Guatemala, where they have been illegally detained.

I have enclosed a copy of a letter addressed to the President of Guatemala, Dr. Alfonso Portillo, protesting this flagrant violation of Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity and calling for the speedy release of the security personnel (see enclosure).

Given this situation, the Government of Belize requests you to use your good offices to assist in securing the early release and repatriation of the detained security personnel.

(*Signed*) Said W. **Musa**
Prime Minister
Minister of Finance and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Enclosure

Letter dated 25 February 2000 from the Prime Minister of Belize addressed to the President of Guatemala

I have the honour to refer to an incident that occurred on Thursday 24 February 2000 when a routine joint Belize Defence Force/Belize Police Department Border Patrol, comprised of three soldiers and a policeman, encountered a Guatemalan Armed Forces Patrol of about 25 soldiers in the vicinity of the border observation post of "Tree Tops" in the Toledo District of Belize.

The site of the encounter was along a marked path well within the established boundaries of Belize, openly and frequently used by Belize's Security Forces on their regular border patrols.

The Belizean patrol, with the aid of global positioning system (GPS) technology, established the location of the encounter as indisputably within Belize (Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) grid system reference BN 639909).

Nevertheless, the Guatemalan Armed Forces Patrol disputed the verification of the location of the encounter and with threat of lethal violence, including the use of firearms, removed the three Belizean soldiers and one Belizean policeman from the location of the encounter in Belize into Guatemala.

Communication between senior commanders of the Belize Defence Force and Guatemala's Military Zone 23 has disclosed that the Belizean soldiers and policeman are being detained at a Guatemalan military facility pending a court appearance, within civil jurisdiction, to answer allegations of illegal entry into Guatemala with firearms and ammunition.

The Government of Belize hereby must express its strong protest to the Government of Guatemala at the illegal action of Guatemalan Armed Forces in entering Belizean territory and forcibly removing Belizean security personnel to Guatemala.

Recalling the Purpose of the United Nations for the promotion of friendly relations among nations, I wish to refer to your security authorities of the requirement of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations, requiring abstention from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations. The aforementioned Purpose and requirement have long animated relations in our hemisphere, as particularly expressed in article 11 of the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States of 1933 and articles 1, 2, 10 and 20 of the Charter of the Organization of American States. In particular, such Purpose and requirement should govern the relations between neighbours sharing a border.

I must further emphasize that any attempt to subject the aforementioned Belizean personnel to Guatemalan juridical jurisdiction would aggravate the situation.

Further, I seek your cooperation in obtaining the speedy release of Belizean security personnel and facilitating their safe return to Belize.

(*Signed*) Said W. **Musa**
Prime Minister
Minister of Finance and Minister for Foreign Affairs